



GENDER STRATEGY

ECOWAS PARLIAMENT 2010 – 2020



*Developed in collaboration with Parliamentary Centre
With funding from the Canadian International Development Agency(CIDA)*

Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION	12
1.1 Background – Context (Anglophone and Francophone)	12
1.2 The justification and need for the strategy	12
1.3 Process leading to the formulation of the strategy	13
2.0 ABOUT ECOWAS AND COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY	14
2.1 Policies (International and Regional)	14
2.2 Organisation and its Structures	16
3.0 CRITICAL GENDER ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED	17
4.0 STRATEGIC GENDER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	18
4.1 Overall Gender Equality Goal	18
4.2 Strategic Gender Equality and Women’s Rights Objectives	18
4.3 General Principles	19
5.0 GENDER STRATEGY APPROACHES	23
5.1 Legislation, Institutionalization and Implementation of Key Instruments	23
5.2 Awareness, Sensitization, Advocacy and Communication on Gender Equity	23
5.3 Capacity building and Training in Gender Issues and Gender Mainstreaming	23
5.4 Involvement of men in gender equality and women’s rights	23
5.5 Research and Reviews on Gender and women’s Rights	24
5.6 Collect adequate and relevant sex-disaggregated information	24
5.7 Gender Analysis	24
5.8 Enhancing Gender Information and knowledge	26
5.9 Engender Participation and Decision-making	26
5.10 Organizational structures and gender balance - Gender Centre, Gender Unit, ECOFEPA	26
5.11 Collaboration and Partnerships	26
5.12 Monitoring and Evaluation	26
5.13 Gender Equality Financing and Sensitive Budgeting	27
5.14 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms – Outcomes and Impacts	27
5.15 Reporting Mechanisms	27
6.0 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS	30
6.1 ECOWAS PARLIAMENT	30
6.2 ECOWAS GENDER CENTRE	30
6.3 MEMBER STATES / NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS	30
6.4 CIVIL SOCIETY, POLICY MAKERS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	30
6.5 TIME FRAME	30
7.0 CONCLUSIONS	32
ANNEXES	33
Annex 1: Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation	33
Annex 2: Gender Definitions	35
Annex 3: Administrative organ of the ECOWAS	36

Executive Summary

Overview of Gender in West Africa

- That there exist several international and regional gender legal instruments that member states have signed onto yet there are still challenges with the implementation and domestication.
- Most of the citizens of the sub-region are hardly aware of the legal instruments and national gender policies and so are unable to participate and contribute effectively to the implementation.
- There are still issues around women's participation in decision making in almost all the countries in the sub-region
- Though the girl-child enrolment in education has improved the problem lies with retaining them in school to enable them attain professional and academic qualifications.
- There are still traditional practices which are abusive of women's rights
- Issues of gender and sexual based violence still exists and persists in member countries and need to be consistently addressed.
- Lack of basic services in especially rural communities still affect women's health with increasing maternal and child death rates.
- There is lack of political will and commitment of some national governments to implement and or domesticate gender instruments they have signed onto or even national gender policies developed.
- With the exception of a few countries such as Liberia, there are limited or no systems and structures to enable effective gender mainstreaming in member countries.
- ECOWAS has limited or no mandate to follow-up and ensure that states are implementing legal instruments and policies for effective gender equality.
- The traditional perception on the role and function of women continues to feature in policy making and implementation.
- Women for lack of access to employment have low incomes and are constantly in a cycle of poverty and its attendant consequences for development.

There are great efforts and initiatives in member states. There are women organizations, ministries of women and children, gender sensitized projects by civil society organizations that are contributing their quota.

It is important that ECOWAS Parliament identifies some of these to work with and to provide leverage for further work on gender issues. In addition to the ECOWAS Commission on Gender there is the Gender Centre, the Gender Committee and ECOFEPA as laudable initiatives.

We need to collaborate and make improved impact. There are currently ongoing discussions on setting quotas for gender mainstreaming and women's participation. This should be formalised and supported in each member state and at the ECOWAS level.

Situation of West Africa States in Relation to the International Gender Legal Instruments:

Although most African states are signatories of well known documents on gender equality (i.e. declaration of human rights, CEDAW, Beijing platform for action...), the real impact of these international instruments on women's lives has limited and variable.

As identified as a critical gender issues the strategy is to ensure that all member countries sign to all the necessary and relevant international and regional instruments on gender equality promotion.

These instruments must not only remain on the shelves but measures in place for their implementation are adopted by member countries. The ECOWAS parliament must strategically lobby and dialogue.

Gender Situation in Cape Verde

Concepts Used

Cape Verde: (1975-1994) - WOMAN

- ▣ The speech and action of non-governmental organizations may be included in the tradition of the feminist thought because "their claims are centered on equality in the exercise of rights and on the fact that women share a different reality from that of men".
- ▣ The category of woman had an essentially operative character. Actions were focused on changing women's conditions in their access to different social services, particularly health and education;

Gender

- ▣ The incorporation of the gender concept in the discourse and action guidelines of international organizations, namely the UN organizations, takes place in 1995, at the Fourth International Conference on Women, in Beijing;
- ▣ In CV: the terminology comes into use at around the same time.
 - ⦿ It is used as an indication of privileged conceptions in political terms;

Key actions to Operationalize the Gender Strategy :

- Review recruitment policies and administrative procedures for the representation of women within ECOWAS parliament
- Review equality policy within the administration of the ECOWAS parliament
- Organize capacity building sessions for parliamentarians on existing mechanisms and instruments
- Adoption of a resolution for the ratification of all treaties and international conventions as well as advocating for the adoption of the texts by member countries of ECOWAS
- A monitoring and evaluation should be in place.

- ⦿ Might have take on a neutralizing role in regards to the feminist ideals;
- ⦿ It is used in the descriptive sense, without contemplating the analytical dimension that privileges the notion of power;
- ⦿ There are no systematized evidence on the existence or not of structured inquiries within non governmental organizations, questioning the origins of inequalities, or the power relations.

Socio-economic Situation

- ▣ Unemployment rate: 22.6%, among women 27.2%, among men 15.5%.
- ▣ Activity rate among men : 67.3% and women 54.7%.
- ▣ Poverty – 26.6% : Poverty among women headed households (56.3%), is greater than in men headed households (43.7%).
- ▣ Public Administration: slightly higher for men -51.3% of employees against 48.7% of women.
- ▣ Deficit of women is notable in internal security (9%), in agriculture and the environment (23%) and criminal police (25.3%).

- ▣ Overall presence of women – education sector (56.7%) and health (64.5%)
- ▣ The shift of economic activities increases the vulnerability of women toward work and reduces their opportunities for access to employment;
- ▣ Increasingly, women are in the role of providers and not as a source of additional income;
- ▣ There were no significant changes in the gender division of household work, or improvements in social policies that support families, resulting in an excessive overburden for women;
- ▣ With exception to running and drinking water, men headed households enjoy a better situation, namely gas for cooking, mains connection, owning computers and automobiles, and access to waste disposal services.

Education

Increase in the academic level of the population in general and of women, in particular

- ▣ Adult literacy rate: 83.8%, being 78.8% for women and 89.4% for men;
- ▣ Basic Education: Net enrollment rate : 88.7%
- ▣ Secondary Ed: Net enrollment rate: 62%, being 67% for girls and 57% for boys.
- ▣ Slight engagement of curricula development works toward promoting effective education for equality.
- ▣ Differentiated success among girls and boys.
- ▣ Increased attendance in higher education.
- ▣ Health
- ▣ Retreat of diseases resulting from or associated to hygiene – sanitary and socioeconomic conditions, even with periodic lapses – cholera epidemic (1995), measles (1997) and dengue (2009).
- ▣ Maternal mortality, annual figures between 5 and 11 deaths, in 2005 stood at 14.5 per 100.000 live births
- ▣ In 2007, birth rate was 25.1 per thousand inhabitants and mortality rate was 5.3 per thousand.

- ▣ Life expectancy is of 76 years for women and 69 years for men.
- ▣ HIV/AIDS and reproductive health ???
- ▣ Legal Instruments
- ▣ Constitution of the Republic: Prohibits discrimination based on sex, recognizes existence of elements of discrimination against women.
- ▣ Specific laws: Education, Health
- ▣ 2008 : Labor Code : Chapter on “Women”, recognizing domestic work as a professional category
- ▣ 2009: Social Security System
- ▣ Others: Law on Micro-finances, Social Housing, Special law on GBV.

Institutional Context

In various sectors, there is a manifestation of clear deficiency in gender mainstreaming and, thus, in implementing relevant actions.

- ▣ In almost all instruments of intervention there is a explicit intention that action will take into consideration the situation of women or the gender issue; however, this approach is not obvious in the interventions;
- ▣ In planning exercises, the evidence of gender differences resulting from the readings of information does not appear to be systematized, or taken into account in designing policies and strategies, or in outlining and budgeting for activities to be developed.
- ▣ Urban Violence

Gender biased;

- ▣ Need for women to participate in problem solving
- ▣ Exercise of power
- ▣ From the standpoint of the law, men and women enjoy formal equality, in their access to and exercise of power in the public sphere, so there is no direct discrimination;

- ▣ Data regarding the number of men and women in the legislature and local government indicate the existence of indirect discrimination, since the presence of women is significantly lower than of men – women don't even represent one fifth of those elected.
 - 2006 Legislative Elections – 11 women elected (15.2%)
 - 2008 Local Elections – 22% of women elected
 - Government: Since 2008 - parity

Exercise of power

- ▣ We have achieved parity in the executive branch. This has to do with the mechanism of access to power. In the case of the legislature or local governments, access results from a competitive process, elections. In the case of the executive power, access depends on appointments, so the result may be the outcome of a political option of conjuncture.
- ▣ The need to unveil the mechanisms that create and reproduce inequalities in power relations, according to Osborne (2005:167), are manifested in the differences between groups that compete for the **access to resources, in the power of friends, availability of time and socialization models (networking)**.
- ▣ Manifestations that point to a model of the male power:
 - Nearly half of Capeverdean households are headed by women. Most of which are headed by a single-parent, the male or fatherly figure is absent, but they are not considered incomplete.
 - Acceptance, on the part of women, of mechanisms that control mobility, relationships, money management by the men;
 - High rates of gender violence: Over one-fifth of women are victims of violence by their companions or former companions.

Strategies

Guided by the International and National Gender Instruments, Policies and the ECOWAS Treaty and Protocols signed by various Member States the strategy should consider the following:

- ▣ Awareness and Sensitization on Gender Situation and Issues
- ▣ Capacity Building and Training
- ▣ Involvement of men as key stakeholders
- ▣ Gender Analysis and Research
- ▣ Engendering Participation and Decision Making
- ▣ Gender Equality and Sensitive Budgeting and Financing
- ▣ Supporting and Promoting Girls Education
- ▣ Monitoring Mechanisms, lobby and Advocacy
- ▣ Synergy among the various ECOWAS structures on Gender; the Community on Gender, ECOFEPA, Gender Centre, and various national structures.

Activities to achieve the set Goal and Objectives

Anglophone West Africa

Involvement of men as key stakeholders

- ▣ Sensitization of men – training and information sharing
- ▣ Training of male gender champions who would take lead on gender issues (training of trainers)
- ▣ Annual lessons learnt sessions at the regional level to highlight best practices; organised jointly by ECOFEPA, the Gender Committee and the Gender Centre.

Awareness and Sensitization on Gender Situation and Issues

Develop a communication strategy

Capacity Building and Training

Review capacity building and training approaches to reflect the Gender Agenda and not Feminist Agenda

Gender Analysis and Research

Review existing gender analysis reports to identify activities for the way forward both at national and regional levels

Engendering Participation and Decision Making

Training of community leaders

Gender Equality and Sensitive Budgeting and Financing

Support policies for women's Economic participation and opportunities, political empowerment, educational attainment and women's health issues through effective gender budgeting and financial plans

Supporting and Promoting Girls Education

Support the enactment and enforcement of legislation for girl child education

Monitoring Mechanisms, lobby and Advocacy

1. Develop and implement an M&E strategy
2. Set up and maintain lobby and advocacy platforms

Synergy among the various ECOWAS structures on Gender; the Community on Gender, ECOFEPA,

1. Set up a coordination structure at national level
2. ECOFEPA to set up an ECOWAS coordination structure

Francophone West Africa

STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES
STRATEGY 1	Awareness and training session on the legal instruments at all levels Sensitization of men to get them as key actors (resource persons)
STRATEGY 2	Elaborate manuals on gender and development issues Implement them in schools
STRATEGY 3	Training sessions for the Mps, members of committees, national networks, ECOFEPA, governments officials... In leadership Strengthen the capacities of local stakeholders in economic justice issues (projects management, micro credits funding...)
STRATEGY 4	Handle a baseline study on gender equality in the ECOWAS countries Capitalization of best practices
STRATEGY 5	Advocacy to strengthen women political participation in ECOWAS structures The same at the national level (equality, quotas...)
STRATEGY 6	Advocate for gender sensitive budgeting at ECOWAS level The same at the national level
STRATEGY 7	Positive discrimination measures to be taken for girls education Resolutions to keep them at school
STRATEGY 8	Operationalization of ECOFEPA Strengthen the gender committee members in advocacy and follow up
STRATEGY 9	Implement a joint consultative committee for policies harmonization Implement joint actions on specific themes

For Lusophone West Africa

National Level

- ▣ Parity participation in decision making bodies

Medium Term

- ▣ Awareness Activities for women, youth and leaders of political parties
- ▣ Review of school curricular
- ▣ Awareness targeting parent using media, NGOs, Institutes, Churches, etc

Regional Level

- ▣ Online database on each of the countries
- ▣ Creation and installation of a permanent coordination structure.

Concretizing the Gender Strategy Areas: Regional and National Levels

Sub-regional level strategy areas

At both national and regional levels, gender work shall be based on the national and international gender legal instruments, policies, ECOWAS treaty and protocols.

- ▣ Regional level refers to:
 - ▣ The community parliament and other structures of the commission
 - ▣ The gender committee
 - ▣ ECOFEPA
 - ▣ Gender centre, etc
 - ▣ Gender analysis and research in member states (set baseline and best practices)
- ▣ Support and provide mandate for the functioning of all ECOWAS gender structures and systems (the gender committee, ECOFEPA, gender centre, etc)
- ▣ Organise annual sharing and learning from gender best practice forums
- ▣ Advocate and lobby for
 - ⦿ Engendering participations and decision making in member states and at ecowas level.
 - ⦿ Policies, enactment and enforcement of laws for the promotion of girl child education
 - ⦿ Policies , enactment and enforcement of laws promoting gender sensitive budgeting and financing at ECOWAS and within member states.
- ▣ Support capacity building and training of various stakeholders especially at ECOWAS level on gender and development;
- ▣ Develop strategies to support and complement the implementation and sustainability of the gender strategy:
 - ▣ A communication strategy
 - ▣ An m&e strategy

National Level Strategy Areas

- ▣ Coordination of gender initiatives e.g. Gender centres to provide:
 - ▣ Update information and data
 - ▣ Regular gender analysis highlighting emerging gender issues
 - ▣ Learning materials to enhance capacity development in gender and development
 - ▣ Support the development of gender sensitive policy and implementation
 - ▣ Education and sensitization of citizens on gender and development and the situation of their communities.
 - ▣ Building capacities for gender and development
 - ▣ Advocate and lobby on specific gender issues for change.

NEXT STEPS

Key Conclusions and Closure

- i. Submission of workshop report to the Gender Committee for adoption
- ii. Submission of workshop report to the Plenary Session
- iii. Draft resolution on the Gender Strategy including detailed proposals on activities and budget for adoption by the ECOWAS Parliament.
- iv. Final Strategy Document by the Parliamentary Centre to the next ECOWAS Parliament Session in September 2010
- v. Based on experience in working with this Session on this Project, review and strengthen collaboration with the Parliamentary Centre
- vi. Training of all ECOWAS Parliamentarians on the Gender Strategy Gender
- vii. Members of the Gender Committee
- viii. Women Parliamentarians
- ix. Meeting of the Gender Committee with ECOFEPA and the Gender Centre on the Gender Strategy Document, to outline detail action areas.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

1.1 Background – Context (Anglophone and Francophone)

Although most African states are signatories of well-known documents on gender equality such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, the real impact of these international instruments on women's lives has been limited and variable.

Gender disparities are still prevalent in West African countries. Closing the gender gap and enhancing women's participation in development is essential not only for building a just society, but also a prerequisite for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among people on a sustainable basis. Although some member States of ECOWAS have made some progress towards achieving development guided by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), gender inequalities continue to limit women's capabilities and constrain their ability to participate fully in and contribute to the economies of their countries.

The Parliament has a crucial role to play in contributing to the development processes and addressing critical issues that affects its constituents. The Parliament has an important role to play in recognizing and enforcing gender-based laws such as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325; and also by passing gender responsive laws; parliament can ensure governments adopt policies that addresses the needs of both men and women.

1.2 The Justification and need for the Strategy

The 1st West African Women's Policy Forum held in Accra, Ghana on December 2 to 3, 2008 signaled the need for a comprehensive gender strategy for the implementation of key issues in the policy. The forum brought together over 50 participants from West Africa including women's groups, networks, women in government, gender machineries, and ECOWAS. Women from other parts of the African continent and the world were also represented. Among key deliberations the forum offered sixteen (16) key policy recommendations to enhance the involvement of women in leadership and decision making processes across the region as following: ¹

ECOWAS as the most progressive regional body on the continent, should increase the numbers of women in key decision making positions at the Commission and other institutions. It is important that the African Union's standard of gender parity be adopted at all levels;

ECOWAS and in particular the Gender and Development Centre in Dakar and the Gender Unit at the Commission should develop more inclusive ways of working with women's groups to achieve the implementation of its protocols and other policies. The Centre should be a "rallying ground" for women in the region. For example, given the unique impact of migration on women, the Gender Centre should lead the process of placing women at the core of implementing the Protocol on Free Movement, Right of Residence and Establishment;

¹ 1st West African Women's Policy Forum is available at WACSI Secretariat. Contact info@wacsi.org

- ▣ Article 63 of ECOWAS Revised Treaty on Women and Development;
- ▣ Recommendation of the meeting of Ministers of Women Affairs of ECOWAS Member States held in Abuja, 9th December, 2002;
- ▣ Decision A/DEC.16/01.3 relating to the transformation of the West African Women Association (WAWA) into the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre;
- ▣ Decision A/DEC.7/12/03 on the establishment of an ECOWAS Technical Commission to address issues relating to Gender Equality.
- ▣ Regulation C/REG.14/12/03 on the establishment of a Unit for Gender Child and Youth matters within the Human Development Department of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS.

First Ladies in West Africa through the auspices of the ECOWAS Gender Centre and national gender ministries should be targeted to become involved in policy formulation processes at national and regional levels; and

ECOWAS leaders should invest in strengthening the Gender and Development Centre in Dakar, to enable it play a more influential and constructive role in policy influencing in the region for both Anglophone and Francophone West Africa.

1.3 Process leading to the formulation of the strategy

The first step to the development of this strategy can be directly traced to the ECOWAS gender policy since all policies require strategic positioning for implementation.

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) and Women Peace and Security Network, Africa (WIPSEN Africa) with support from the African Women Development Fund (AWDF), the international Women's Programme of the Open Society Institute, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and Abigail Disney organized the 1st annual West African Women's Policy Forum in December 2008 to inform, guide, influence and monitor policy formulation and implementation on issues that

affect women in West Africa. The Forum provided a platform for women's groups, associations, coalitions and women in government and other decision making positions to reflect on women's roles and participation in governance, development, peace and security in the region and to design concrete strategies for influencing and informing policy processes.

Other key processes included various workshops held to engage parliamentarians and to strengthen the capacity of the ECOWAS parliament towards good governance and to prevent and manage conflicts.

The Workshop on Conflict Resolution and Management organized by the Parliamentary Centre in collaboration with the ECOWAS Parliament with funding from CIDA, had a component on gender which clearly articulated the importance of gender mainstreaming. The workshop among other topics outlined the particular role of parliament in Gender and Conflict management and provided some basis for a strategy. Parliaments were called upon to bridge gaps in policy by monitoring and working closely with the executive arms on issues of gender. Parliaments have also been called upon to condemn impunity with which some African Heads of States treat issues emanating from conflicts with regard to gender. These workshops also recommended for an effective way to ensure dialogue at the Heads of states meeting in ECOWAS. Addressing gender dimensions and implications of political, economic and social dimensions of conflicts were considered important.

The Workshop on developing the Gender Strategy

The drafting of this strategy has been greatly supported by on-going discussions within ECOWAS Parliamentarians on gender issues. Based on some of the outcomes of these discussions a workshop was held in Dakar in April, 2010 specifically to bring together all ideas, suggestions and recommendations from various engagements through a participatory process culminating into this strategy for mainstreaming gender in the ECOWAS parliament.

2.0 ECOWAS AND COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

The formulation of a policy and strategy for the ECOWAS has been ongoing since the early 2000. In 2002 the member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Secretariat, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations agencies, The World Bank and other partners committed to formulate, harmonize and co-ordinate the appropriate policies and mechanisms for the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women in the region.

The adoption of an effective gender policy was derived from the need to create an energizing platform for mapping gender issues and consideration into the regional co-operation and integration processes in West Africa. ECOWAS is the designated focal point for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

A joint study undertaken in December 2002 by the ECOWAS Secretariat identified critical gaps and disparities in the legal frameworks, economic participation, eradication of poverty, access to education and health, and socio-economic and political participation and representation.

Strategies identified by ECOWAS Women's Ministries and experts in December 2002 will incorporate the gender mainstreaming approach based on the Commonwealth Gender Management System (GMS); the establishment of a gender directorate; the development of a sex-disaggregated database system; the capacity programme for member countries in particular to enhance monitoring of gender equality and raise awareness on the gender policy and its implementation; the empowerment of women and the girl-child through affirmative action; the promotion of women in peace-keeping, trade and finance; strategic partnerships and resource mobilization.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, through the Gender Section of the Social Transformation Programmes Division and the Governance and Institutional Development Division, has funded a CFTC consultant, Dr Sylvia Charles, to work

with the member countries, to finalize the draft Gender Policy Framework and Programme.

It is expected that the ECOWAS Heads of Government will formally endorse the regional gender policy and programme by the end of 2004. However, the recommendations are already being put into place.

A Gender Division has been set up within the ECOWAS Secretariat. This Division will spearhead the mainstreaming of gender issues across key regional programmes and a Gender Development Centre within the region has been established at Dakar, Senegal to coordinate gender.

2.1 Policies (International and Regional)

International Level

The international frameworks include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. The promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first attempt to codify standards for all peoples and nations to strive for in the promotion of human dignity.

The UDHR Proclaims in its preamble:

"Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of member states themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction."

The rights enshrined in the UDHR are: Freedom from discrimination; Right to life, liberty and security of the person; Freedom from slavery, torture or degrading treatment; Equality of persons before the law; Freedom of expression and political participation Many Conventions and Covenants draw their inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural (ECOSOC) Rights

and; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. They constitute the Bill of Rights. The promotion of gender equality and human rights is indeed a human rights issue. Liberation of women from discrimination and the promotion of all forms of freedom for women and girls indeed are central to gender equality and mainstreaming.

The pursuit of equal rights for women through international law has been a slow process. The principle that everyone is entitled to rights “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex...” was given voice in Article 2 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the Declaration was non-binding and it took campaigners over 30 years to cajole the international community into concrete legal action against gender injustice.

This commitment came in the shape of *the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. CEDAW has been described as a bill of rights for women; it spells out the areas in which women experience discrimination and commits countries to amend their laws, construct national gender policies and create institutions to deliver them. Although CEDAW has been ratified by almost all countries including members of the ECOWAS states, overall global progress remains disappointing. Over twenty states have exercised reservations in the ratification process, a formal device which permits exemption from contentious sections. Ineffective enforcement of national legislation has further restrained the pace of reform, as has the failure of the US to ratify the treaty.

A positive development in 2009 was the decision to merge the four UN agencies currently engaged in gender issues. The new entity should bring greater coherence and will enjoy a more senior position in the hierarchy of reporting to the Secretary-General.

Beijing Platform for Action (1995): In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. The Beijing Platform for Action advocates institutional mechanisms in the form of national machinery to focus on mainstreaming (integrating at all levels) gender concerns within national policy, creating the conditions for gender equality at all levels, and allocating specific national and international resources towards these ends. The Platform embodies two strategic objectives: (i) ensuring women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making;

and (ii) increasing women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. These two continue to have direct implications on the development of policies, strategies and actions on gender equality.

Commonwealth Gender Policy² & Plan of Action

The Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Declaration, adopted in September 2000, is a global development agenda that comprises a set of mutually reinforcing development goals, targets and indicators, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Development Goals represent a renewed global effort around: (1) Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger; (2) Achieving Universal Primary Education; (3) Promoting Gender Equality and Empower Women, (4) Reducing Child Mortality; (5) Improving Maternal Health; (6) Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) Ensuring Environmental Sustainability; and (8) Developing a Global Partnership for development.³ The Millennium development goals, (MDGs) which build upon existing country level development frameworks for achieving pro-poor sustainable development, have set a target of eliminating gender inequality in education by 2015.

All the MDGs have direct linkages to gender equality promotion but Goal 3 is ‘to promote gender equality and empower women’. The goal has one target: ‘to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015’. Four indicators are used to measure progress towards the goal: the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women to men in the 15-to 24-year-old age group; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. The existence of a separate goal on gender equality is the result of decades of advocacy, research and coalition-building by the international women’s movement. Its very existence demonstrates that the global community has accepted the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment to the development paradigm to which all policies and strategies must adhere to.

AU Gender Policy

² MOWAC, CEDAW Reports

³ MDG Targets and Indicators, **United Nations Millennium Development Goals** (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>).

The African Union (AU) has formulated a gender strategy which encapsulates decisions and Declarations of the Assembly and other global commitments on gender and women's empowerment and seeks to demonstrate the continued leadership of the African Union in advancing gender equality in the continent. The Gender Policy provides a mandate for the operationalization of Assembly commitments and is accompanied by a comprehensive ten year Action Plan, which will guide the implementation of these commitments by AU organs. And also compliment ongoing implementation of these commitments at the Member States level and in Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which includes.

Other African regional considerations which informs policy and strategy development are the New Partnership for Development NEPAD (July 2001) Gender Equality Objective 5 and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (SDGE) (July 2004).

ECOWAS Treaty and Gender Protocol/ ECOWAS Gender Policy

2.2 Organisation and its Structures

ECOWAS was established on 28 May 1975 to promote cooperation and integration among West African countries. It was initially made up of the following sixteen (16) member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Following the withdrawal of Mauritania in 2001 there are now fifteen (15) Member States making up the community.

The mission of ECOWAS is to promote co-operation and development in all spheres of economic activity through the removal of all forms of trade barriers and obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods and services, as well as the harmonizing of regional sector policies.

The main objective is to establish a large West African common market and create a monetary union.

The ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC)

This concern has resulted in the creation of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC), which was established in 2003 with a mission to "strive for the development of women in the sub-region".

The centre's priority areas include education and health; economy and trade; governance, representation and decision-making; agriculture and environment, peace and security.

It does this by initiating, developing, facilitating and co-coordinating strategies to ensure gender mainstreaming in the community's programmes. In 1993, member states of ECOWAS initiated a process to formulate, harmonize, co-ordinate and establish appropriate policies and mechanisms for the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women.

This was then followed in 2001 by efforts to provide groundwork for an ECOWAS women's empowerment policy laying emphasis on the framework and appropriate mechanisms for gender-mainstreaming in ECOWAS programmes, as well as the structural analysis of ECOWAS Commission and partner organizations.

And in 2003, there was the adoption and establishment of a gender department within the ECOWAS Commission. As part of its mandate to enhance the status of women in the West African sub-region, the EGDC in collaboration with Ghana's Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), organized a one-day national information and sensitization seminar in Accra in June 2008, to develop a list of recommendations to guide the EGDC in achieving gender equality.

3.0 CRITICAL GENDER ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE STRATEGY

We know that gender is a concept which refers to the social relations between women and men and the social differences between women and men, which are acquired, which are susceptible to change with time and which vary largely from one country to another, than among the many different cultures at the interior of a country. Historically, the concept of gender has evolved from a Women in Development concept, which was the main focus in the last two decades. The International Decade for women with the theme of "Equal Opportunities for equal participation for Development and Peace" which emphasised women's participation in development interventions were grossly misunderstood to mean that women were fighting men for equal power.

Negatively, this translated into many disagreeable situations as men saw their hitherto unchallenged power threatened. Research has proved that the well-intentioned UN decade for Women had its lapses as a result of power relations between men and women, emanating from centuries old cultural practices and traditions, the socialisation process, peer influence and misinterpretation of religious concepts⁴.

To improve the situation of women by adapting a Women Centred approach, although did yield some results; the impact intended was not very obvious. Many development reviews revealed a worsening socio-cultural and political decline of women. An alternative approach was recommended which emphasised the review of the power relations and general relationships between men and women as they impact on development interventions.

Gender refers to socially assigned roles and responsibilities (including the gender division of labour) for men and women, which generally lead to women holding an inferior position in all societies.

As result, they have less access and control of

⁴ Esther Boserup, 1985

resources; fewer legal rights are more often subject to physical violence. Women have little or no voice in decision-making, they have less education, work more hours and have less leisure or poorer quality of life. Simply put, women are poorer than men and form the majority of our target group.

The gender approach therefore seeks to analyse the relationships between men and women, boys and girls and their social roles as assigned by a given community. The understanding of factors that lead to these socially constructed roles which have impeached upon women's development and participation in general and to some extent on men's development as well will enhance a more participatory approach to development planning and implementation involving all community members with the ultimate goal of impacting positively, equally or equitably on all members of the community.

During the gender strategy development workshop in Dakar the key gender issues identified by the participating parliamentary group on gender were:

- ▣ That there exist several international and regional gender legal instruments that member states have signed unto yet there are still challenges with the implementation and domestication.
- ▣ Most of the citizens of the sub-region are hardly aware of the legal instruments and national gender policies and so are unable to participate and contribute effectively to the implementation.
- ▣ There are still issues around women's participation in decision making in almost all the countries in the sub-region
- ▣ Though the girl-child enrolment in education has improved the problem lies with retaining them in school to enable them attain professional and academic qualifications.
- ▣ There are still traditional practices which are abusive of women's rights
- ▣ Issues of gender and sexual based violence still exists and persists in member countries and need to be consistently addressed.
- ▣ Lack of basic services in especially rural communities still affect women's health with increasing maternal and child death rates.
- ▣ There is lack of political will and commitment of some national governments to implement and or

domesticate gender instruments they have signed onto or even national gender policies developed.

- ▣ With the exception of a few countries such as Liberia, there are limited or no systems and structures to enable effective gender mainstreaming in member countries.
- ▣ ECOWAS has limited or no mandate to follow-up and ensure that states are implementing legal instruments and policies for effective gender equality.
- ▣ The traditional perception on the role and function of women continues to feature in policy making and implementation.
- ▣ Women for lack of access to employment have low incomes and are constantly in a cycle of poverty and its attendant consequences for development.

It is important for women leaders particularly within the ECOWAS to appropriate and popularize the regional instruments and the mechanisms of governance and prevention of conflicts. The women are inescapable actresses in the search for peace and have proved themselves during the conflicts in Ivory Coast, Casamance, Guinea. The involvement of women's associations in restoring peace to the West African sub-region is important as well as women. The Parliamentarians have a responsibility when it comes to conflict prevention, controlling good governance in States and guaranteeing peace in sub-region. The Parliamentarians for instance has a role to sensitize and make known the resolution 1325 adopted by the Security Council.

4.0 STRATEGIC GENDER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Overall Gender Equality Goal

An ECOWAS in which member states attain a regional gender equity through harmonized national gender policies, strategies across the sub-region towards the achievement of regional gender equality. By 2020 there should be gender equity in all structures.

A Period of 10 years compliance to gender targets within the ECOWAS region should be established

4.2 Strategic Gender Equality and Women's Rights Objectives

- ▣ An accountable system set up to facilitate member countries achieve gender equality targets of the sub-region
- ▣ Established standards in the promotion of gender equality in the sub region (freedom of choice)
- ▣ Strengthen capacities of member states to facilitate operationalization of gender policies and international legal instruments (human, institutional, technical and financial)
- ▣ Ensure effective gender equality mainstreaming and the integration of gender concerns in sector programming
- ▣ Involve every all ministries and sectors including the security forces in member states in dissemination and information sharing on gender equality promotion
- ▣ Adapt national legislation to treaties and legislations

- ▣ National frameworks harmonized
- ▣ Harmonized sector gender policies and strategies
- ▣ Gender budgeting strategies adopted
- ▣ Monitoring and evaluation systems set in place in monitoring inequalities
- ▣ Strengthened and enhanced partnerships in gender equality

4.3 General Principles

The strategy shall be guarded by the following key principles:

- ▣ ECOWAS and member states commitment to gender equality and equity;
- ▣ ECOWAS system-wide responsibility towards ensuring the adoption, adaptation and implementation of legislative instruments and protocols on gender equality;
- ▣ ECOWAS and member states measure of accountability to gender equality and women's rights promotion in the sub-region;
- ▣ ECOWAS and member states understanding and agreement of critical gender issues to be addressed;
- ▣ ECOWAS analysis/understanding of the history, context, rationale, ideology and implications of gender equality promotion in the sub-region
- ▣ ECOWAS and member states programmatic, organizational, and support for country-level and sector-wide gender equality transformation in countries
- ▣ ECOWAS supports the allocation of financial, human and technical resources towards addressing gender equality in member states
- ▣ ECOWAS seriously lobbies and dialogue on gender issues among member states

Key elements of the Strategy are summarized below as discussed at the Dakar meeting:

No.	ELEMENTS	KEY ACTIONS	PARTNERS
1.	Institution building	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mobilization of Volunteers (e.g. ECOWAS Youth volunteers) ii. Development of Infrastructure (Gender Centre), etc. iii. Office Equipment (IT) <p>Medium Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for the increase of women representatives • Set up a database of potential female representatives 	<p>GTZ</p> <p>DANIDA</p> <p>PC</p> <p>ECOFEPA</p>
	Operationalized institutional and legal arrangements	<p>Short Term :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review recruitment policies and administrative procedures for the representation of women within ECOWAS Parliament ii. Review equality policy in recruitment within the administration of the ECOWAS Parliament iii. Organize capacity building sessions for parliamentarians on existing mechanisms and instruments <p>Medium term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. adoption of a resolution for the ratification of all treaties and international conventions as well as advocating for the adoption of the texts by member countries of ECOWAS and ii. A Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) should be in place 	

2. Programming	<p>Short term:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Baseline survey ii. Participation of stakeholders iii. Design of Advocacy & campaign approach iv. Analysis & planning v. Campaigns & advocacy : give recommendations for parliamentarians to undertake advocacy in their countries vi. Lobby & Dialogue vii. Gender Budgeting viii. Gender auditing ix. Awareness Raising x. Reporting <p>Medium & Long Term</p> <p>Research: i) comparative studies on gender in the educational system, ii)popularize/publicize comparative study in relation to the ECOWAS commission, iii) Adoption of resolutions on gender equity in educational systems.</p> <p>Adoption of Political Strategies for National Gender policy implementations through a baseline, adoption of resolutions / recommendations to national policies and strategies and capacity building for parliamentarians and administrative personnel</p>	<p>CSOs</p> <p>UNFPA</p> <p>UN system</p> <p>DPS</p> <p>PC</p> <p>IBIS</p> <p>Consultants</p> <p>ECOFEPA</p> <p>CIEFFA research institutions</p>
Capacity building	<p>Short & Medium Term:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Put in place a capacity building programme on gender ii. Training of trainers iii. Orientation for volunteers <p>Medium Term:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Training of community Parliamentarians ii. Facilitate capacity building for national machinery iii. Facilitate orientation for sector ministries iv. Setting up of gender centres in all 15 member countries. <p>Long Term</p> <p>Mutualise/integrate good practices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> v. capitalise and disseminate good practices on application/ implementation of gender in the countries in the areas of education, health 	<p>CSOs national and regional networks</p> <p>PC</p> <p>IBIS</p> <p>Consultants</p> <p>ECOFEPA</p> <p>other international, regional parliaments</p>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding • Networking • Gender Alerts • Gender Newsletter • Campaign Messages • Briefing notes • Documentation/publications 	<p>Media Foundation West Africa</p> <p>ECOWARN</p> <p>FEMNET</p> <p>ECOFEPA</p>

Performance Monitoring framework (PMF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Assessment • Development of monitoring & target indicators 	DPs-CIDA DANIDA
a. M & E System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic Monitoring (6 monthly) 	DFID
b. Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place a gender observer group in West Africa : context, strategies, actions. 	UNDP
c. Performance Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a framework of exchanges and expertise on gender in West Africa 	Consultants FEMNET ECOFEPA
ECOWAS Resolution on Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of application/implementation of gender resolutions 	ECOWAS Commission member states-national parliaments

5.0 GENDER STRATEGY APPROACHES AND INTERVENTIONS

5.1 Legislation, Institutionalization and Implementation of Key Instruments

As identified as a critical gender issues the strategy is to ensure that all member countries sign to all the necessary and relevant international and regional instruments on gender equality promotion. These instruments must not only remain on the shelves but measures in place for their implementation are adopted by member countries. The ECOWAS parliament must strategically lobby and dialogue.

5.2 Awareness, Sensitization, Advocacy and Communication on Critical Gender issues and Gender Equity promotion

A general understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of gender equity promotion is a start for all. There is therefore the need for targeted and focused advocacy, communication and sensitization on gender equity and equality. Advocacy means taking action to bring about the change you are seeking and in this sense gender equity promotion. Therefore advocacy must necessarily take place in a particular context, and be aimed at all the target beneficiaries and collaborators of projects in this sense sector. Gender Advocacy on women's role in the cocoa sector should be targeted at with all the various project collaborators and stakeholders particularly at local, regional and national levels. Trainer of trainers approach possibly to cut down on the numbers and cost of training may be most relevant.

5.3 Capacity building and Training in Gender Issues and Gender Mainstreaming

Despite well intended policies, legislation or practices, promoting gender equality and promoting women's rights and also highlighting the concerns of both women and men does not just happen. There is a clear need for better capacity building and training to be undertaken to increase the viability and effectiveness of gender policies and programmes to remedy the situation, as well as proactively preventing discrimination and bias from happening. Using participatory methods there would be the need to assess and strengthen partner capacity for gender responsive and participatory analysis, planning and implementation. Paying attention to building capacity in gender mainstreaming is also be a major focus in all efforts to address gender equality issues under the project.

Gender sensitivity has to be built into both women and men, particularly in those who are in key positions of decision-making. There is the need to create gender awareness and sensitivity among all categories of staff including management staff. This will include: building the capacity of directors, management and all staff and critically staff of the gender and women's unit. Also capacity building in gender must involve some of the key local partners and stakeholders that ECOWAS works with.

In mainstreaming the above should be integrated into all organizational activities and not necessarily as separate activities. Hence all intended capacity building activities for program staff is necessary to enhance capacity. The initial capacity building must necessarily have the support of a gender expert to backstop by the staff of the gender and women's.

5.4 Involvement of men in gender equality and women's rights

The *ghetorization* of gender issues as women's issues is costly to the cause of gender equality and promotion of women's rights. Gender equality activist Mbuyiselo Botha of the South African Men's Forum has said:

“*We must also be conscious that we do not take over the gender struggle as men. We must always be conscious. The temptation is there, because of men’s tendency to take over. We must be constantly vigilant and remind ourselves that this is a struggle that has to be led by women.***”**

(A. Greig and D. Peacock, 2005 in Men as Partners Program: Promising Practices Guide (South Africa: EngenderHealth).

The roles of men in decision-making continue to be as crucial as the expected role of women. There is the need to actively involve men at all levels in the mainstreaming of gender and women’s equality. Gender mainstreaming must not be “hijacked by few women’s advocates”, neither should the promotion of gender equality be trivialized by women. Men and women must necessarily work together to ensure that ECOWAS goal for the promotion of gender equality are successfully achieved. There should be conscious effort for especially male Commissioners, Directors and Managers to own the process of gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS.

Men can provide critical leadership through their roles as major decision makers, public figures and opinion makers in speaking out against negative perception on gender equality and also discrimination and violence against women. They can support by ensuring that priority is given to the issue of gender equality and women’s rights promotion. Men can also be good role models for other males who would wish to trivialize gender mainstreaming as merely “women’s issue” and provide leadership in addressing negative patriarchal tendencies towards gender equality and women’s rights promotion.

Programmes is proposed details of the initiative is to be further discussed but the goal is to ensure active involvement of men in gender equality and women’s rights promotion with ECOWAS providing the leadership and coordination.

5.5 Research and Reviews on Gender and women’s Rights

Gender mainstreaming is a pretty evolving phenomenon and requires regular research into issues to reveal the inherent gender issues and dynamics. This is also critical for identification of women’s rights abuses which continue to take different forms and dimensions. Gender sensitivity and analysis in all related organizational research, policy development and programming is therefore proposed as a major strategic approach.

5.6 Collect adequate and relevant sex-disaggregated information

The ECOWAS gender centre must ensure this at all level. The collection and management of sex-disaggregated information continue to be the major requirement in all gender analysis which is a prerequisite in gender mainstreaming. ECOWAS as a matter of necessity should ensure that all basic information collected within member countries are collated at the regional level and segregated and analyzed in terms of sex and gender. This is important in revealing existing gaps, track and document major achievements in terms of gender equality and women’s rights promotion

5.7 Gender Analysis

A Gender Analysis Framework is a step-by-step tool to raise questions, analyze information, and develop strategies to increase women’s and men’s roles and participation at all levels. A thorough gender analysis is a critical starting point for the any gender mainstreaming agenda. Questions such as the difference in impacts of a policy/ program on women and men; the advantages and disadvantages; roles and responsibilities; who does what, who has what, who needs what; strategies and approaches in closing the gap between what men and women need and want; etc. need to be asked and analyzed in building a comprehensive picture of the existing situation. This will identify the lacks (that which is not there), gaps (that which is not enough) and mismatches (that which is not right).

A gender analysis should recognize that:

- ▣ Women's and men's lives and therefore experiences, needs, issues and
- ▣ Priorities are different
- ▣ Women's lives are not all the same; the interests that women have in common may be determined as much by their social position or their ethnic identity as by the fact they are women
- ▣ Women's life experiences, needs, issues and priorities are different for different ethnic groups;
- ▣ The life experiences, needs, issues, and priorities vary for different groups of women (dependent on age, ethnicity, disability, income levels, employment status, marital status, sexual orientation and whether they have dependants)
- ▣ Different strategies may be necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for women and men and different groups of women
- ▣ Analyses aim to achieve equity, rather than equality.

Gender analysis will help to provide a basis for robust analysis of the differences between women's and men's lives, and this removes the possibility of analysis being based on incorrect assumptions and stereotypes.

The importance of Gender Analysis

Several different Gender Analysis Frameworks exist today. They are step-by-step tools for carrying out gender analysis, which help to raise questions, analyze information, and develop strategies to increase women's and men's participation in and benefits from forestry programmes.

In general, Gender Analysis Frameworks are concerned with a number of critical questions such as

1. The development context or patterns in an area, answering the questions: What is getting better? What is getting worse?
2. Women's and men's activities and roles in the forestry sectors, answering the questions: Who does what?
3. Women's and men's access to and control

over resources, answering the questions: Who has what? Who needs what?

4. Program actions needed, answering the questions what should be done to close the gaps between what women, and men need? What does development deliver?

The outputs and recommendations from a Gender Analysis can be used in a number of ways:

- Development of management plans to ensure that the contributions of both women and men are adequately recognized in determining access to and control over resources
- Development, or review, of policy to ensure sustainability through equitable participation of all stakeholders
- Profiling of stakeholders to develop an understanding of who the stakeholders are, beyond just gender, to other socially determined characteristics.
- Restructuring of activities and organizations to ensure equitable participation at all levels and in a diversity of functions by both women and men.
- Development of criteria for training selection or recruitment to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to progress in their career and that there are both women and men working in diversity of capacities in the sector to work with the women and men of the other stakeholder groups

Gender analysis examines the differences in women's and men's lives, including those which lead to social and economic inequity for women, and applies this understanding to policy development and service delivery is concerned with the underlying causes of these inequities aims to achieve positive change for women.

5.8 Enhancing Gender Information and knowledge

Key to developing a comprehensive gender framework is the effective management of information and knowledge. Attention needs to be paid to the collation, packaging and dissemination of information - the right information, at the right time, at the right level, to the right person, so that the intended and right decisions can be taken. All three stages of the information management continuum - collation, packaging and dissemination are therefore critical. Issues that need to be kept in mind for collation include - who has the information, what is the quality and quantity of the information available, what format is the information in; for packaging include - how will the information be used, what format should it be in, what decisions and actions are expected from the information provided, who is the user of the information; for dissemination include - what is the best media to use for reaching the intended target group, how can the dissemination facilitate long term capacity building, etc.

The ECOWAS need to effectively partner with stakeholders in the collation, analysis and dissemination of relevant gender and women's equality information to its member states using effective communication channels.

5.9 Engender Participation and Decision-making

The use of participatory strategies to involve both women and men in program implementation is important. The participation of women in all decision-making processes ensures that ECOWAS broader goal in gender mainstreaming is achieved. This will benefit all sections of the society especially in sustainable project management.

5.10 Organizational structures and gender balance - Gender Centre, Gender Unit, ECOFEPA

This is human resource approach where there is an equal opportunity goal and priority aimed at maintaining a gender balance within any organization.

This is critical to ensure that both men and women are involved in decision and program implementation. The day-to-day operations of ECOWAS need to involve and benefit both men and women. This must be done through conscious and stated policies, regulations, and/or management practices.

5.11 Collaboration and Partnerships

All ECOWAS must be responsible for the coordination of the gender equality and women's rights policy, strategy and action plans in member states. The implementation of the action plan would also require some collaboration and partnerships and key partners will include: promotion and ensure that there is effective collaboration and cooperation between activities must ensure the integration of gender in consultation with collaborating institutions and partners such as:

5.12 Monitoring and Evaluation

The use of gender responsive indicators and monitoring processes as a minimum standard for activity design, implementation and monitoring will be crucial to ECOWAS to effectively mainstream gender. Monitoring of gaps and achievements by use of gender sensitive targets and indicators is an effective tool in ensuring that gender objectives and activities are achieved. Monitoring is considered an integral part of the implementation of the strategy. The outcome of which will be used to revise, change the course or even modify the strategy. Evaluation of the process would enable the project to determine whether the objectives of the gender strategy and the desired impact would be met. It is important to:

- ▣ collect sex-disaggregated information on who participates and benefits;
- ▣ Collect information on what prevents or could prevent women and men from participating and benefiting;
- ▣ Identify unintended or harmful effects and changes in gender relations;
- ▣ Produce gender disaggregated data at all levels of the work to enhance gender planning and analysis
- ▣ Develop gender impact indicators / criteria for monitoring and evaluating performance linked to overall monitoring and evaluation frameworks

5.13 Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB):

GRB is a tool which can be used to expose gender inequalities and biases in the distribution of public resources. Many factors are responsible for the slower progress towards gender equity. That includes failure to finance programmes through gender responsive budgeting, so as to achieve committed national and international targets.

The goal of Gender Responsive Budgeting initiatives is to promote equality between women and men by influencing the budgeting process. Collectively, gender responsive budgeting (GRB) initiatives seek to raise awareness of the effects that budgets have on women and men, hold governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality, and achieve gender-responsive budgeting

ECOWAS must assess budgets to see what proportion of financial resources are allocated to activities to promote gender equality and women's rights especially with regard to its programmes, but also in terms of communications and staff human resource development.

This is in line with current national strategy to undertake gender budgeting as one of the strategies for gender mainstreaming. There would be the need for ECOWAS to seek new resources for new and existing programmes with gender equality activities since gender issues are complex and dynamic and especially if current ongoing programme design does not adequately budget for gender mainstreaming activities.

5.14 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms – Outcomes and Impacts

Outcome

- ▣ Harmonized sub-regional gender policies and strategies
- ▣ Equitable representation and participation of both sexes in every field of endeavor
- ▣ Effective gender equality mainstreaming and the integration of gender concerns in sector programming

- ▣ Labour and employment laws in member states reviewed to incorporate gender sensitivity (governmental, non-governmental and private organizations)

Indicators

- Zonal gender centres facilitate the operationalization of harmonized gender policies and strategies according to set standards
- Equitable representation of women in all fields and endeavours best practices in gender in the sub-region
- Structures established / set-up to monitor, document and share best practices in gender mainstreaming in the sub-region
- Sector operationalized the integration of dissemination and information sharing on issues of gender equality in the sub-regional

5.15 Reporting Mechanisms

There will be the need to harmonize the reporting of gender issues and achievements over time among member countries. This needs to be documented to ensure proper documentation.

Summary of Gender Objectives with Strategic Approaches and Actions

ECOWAS STRATEGIC GENDER OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIC APPROACHES AND ACTIONS
<p>Objective 1:</p> <p>An accountable system set to facilitate member countries achieve gender equality targets of the sub-region through the promotion of international, regional and national gender equality and women’s rights Legislative instruments and protocols</p>	<p>General, advocacy, sensitization and awareness creation on international, regional, national conventions and commitments on gender equality and women’s rights among parliamentarians and sub-committee members</p>
	<p>Promote the publication and disseminate standardized gender equality briefing kits for parliamentarians and heads of ECOWAS delegations (bi-lingual productions)</p>
<p>Objective 2:</p> <p>Established standards in the promotion of gender equality in the sub region (freedom of choice)</p>	<p>Gender sensitivity and analysis in research, policy development and programming</p>
	<p>Identification of critical gender and women’s rights issues for inclusion in all plans and actions</p>
	<p>Gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation frameworks and indicators</p>
<p>Objective 3:</p> <p>Strengthen capacities of member states to facilitate operationalization of gender policies and international legal instruments (human, institutional, technical and financial)</p>	<p>Review existing structures and institutions mainstreaming gender including ECOWAS gender centre and also national machinery (ministries of women, gender and development) and also CSO networks to ensure standard capacity and compliance to gender mainstreaming within ECOWAS and within member countries</p>
	<p>Gender capacity building of ECOWAS parliament members</p>
	<p>Training manuals and materials in use in the sub-region reviewed and standardized.</p>
<p>Objective 4:</p> <p>Ensure effective gender equality mainstreaming and the integration of gender concerns in sector programming (special focus must be given to the security forces and uniformed agencies)</p>	<p>Lobbying and dialogue sessions with sector ministers in the ECOWAS sub-region on gender mainstreaming within sectors and sector programmes</p>
	<p>Support the review and establishment of gender analysis tools for sector programming in the sub-region</p>
	<p>Establish strong networks with CSOs, consultants and sector agencies to support gender analysis and mainstreaming in sector programming</p>
	<p>Review gender equality measures in the security and uniformed agencies and establish strategies and actions for their redress</p>

<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Provide in all relevant documents qualitative and quantitative information on the impact of its programmes on gender equality and women and men's rights</p>	<p>Review existing and available documents to ensure the inclusion of related gender equality and women's rights issues in parliamentary documentation</p>
	<p>Ensure the inclusion of gender issues and components in all procedures and protocols</p>
<p>Objective 6</p> <p>Support the National Machinery for Gender and Women's Rights, partners, civil society organizations and other partners in the promotion of gender equality and women's rights promotion</p>	<p>Collaborate and partner with national ministries and agencies responsible for gender, women, family and children's issues in all member states</p>
<p>Objective 7</p> <p>Adopt gender analysis, gender-responsive planning and budgeting methods</p>	<p>Advocate and lobby for the integration of basic training in gender planning and analysis tools at all levels of ministerial work in member countries</p>
	<p>Support and lobby for the adoption, Sensitization and Training in gender budgeting and financial accountability using gender budgeting tools</p>
<p>Objective 8</p> <p>Enhance the capacity of staff to understand and operationalize gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, planning and gender budgeting in the promotion of human rights</p>	<p>Capacity building and training of ECOWAS parliamentarians and member of parliaments and ministers of states in member states in gender mainstreaming – gender analysis, planning, women's rights, gender sensitive programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation</p>
<p>Objective 9</p> <p>Support the mainstreaming of gender in the implementation and evaluation of all policies, programmes, and projects to ensure compliance to gender policy objectives and strategies</p>	<p>Support the review of sector policies, strategies and plans in sector ministries of member countries to adopt a gender sensitive approaches</p>
	<p>Support member countries in the adoption of participatory gender monitoring and evaluation frameworks in compliance to the gender strategy and policy</p>
<p>Objective 10</p> <p>Ensure the use of gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation tools to track successes in gender</p>	<p>Advocate for the development and adoption of gender sensitive sector monitoring and evaluation frameworks which will be harmonized among nations</p>

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 ECOWAS PARLIAMENT

ECOWAS should demonstrate clear commitment to the implementation of its policy and this strategy. As a matter of urgency ECOWAS should consider creating some gender balance by increasing the numbers of women in key decision making positions at the Commission and other institutions.

It is important that the African Union's standard of gender parity be adopted also by ECOWAS which will support the at all levels.

It is important that ECOWAS leaders should invest in strengthening the Gender and Development Centre in Dakar, and also national gender and women's machinery to enable it play a more influential and constructive role in policy influencing in the region and in member states.

6.2 ECOWAS GENDER CENTRE

The centre shall be the coordinating agency for gender mainstreaming within the ECOWAS and among member countries. Gender and Development Centre in Dakar and the Gender Unit at the Commission should develop more inclusive ways of working with women's groups to achieve the implementation of its protocols and other policies.

The Centre should be a "rallying ground" for gender equality promotion in the region.

The Establishment of the Gender and Development Centre in Dakar and the Gender Unit at the Commission should develop more inclusive ways of working with national gender and women's machineries and women's groups to achieve the implementation of its international and regional protocols and also national policies.

The Centre should be a "rallying ground" for women in the region. For example, given the unique impact of migration on women, the Gender Centre should lead the process of placing women at the core of implementing the various Protocols and legislative instruments on gender equality and women's rights and ensure the implementation of these strategies within ECOWAS and among member states.

6.3 MEMBER STATES / NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

ECOWAS Governments should close the gap between signing and adopting instruments and implementation. There should be more commitment by States to fully domesticate CEDAW, The protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women, and the ECOWAS gender policy.

At a parallel inter-face level, the collaboration of technical line department related to education, agriculture, health, finance, trade and employment is indispensable for policy, planning, programming and resource allocation effectiveness.

Given the appallingly low representation of women at national decision making structures, governments in the region should recommit to ensuring at least 30 per cent of women in all levels of government;

West African women in government positions should view women in civil society as allies and forge more strategic and interdependent relationships that will enhance women's ability to influence policies; and

Member states initiatives for the promotion of gender equality must be supported and expedited.

6.4 CIVIL SOCIETY, POLICY MAKERS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

A comprehensive list of key actors and agencies will be concerned with the implementation of this Gender Empower Strategy. The principal ones are the various departments and units on gender and Women's Affairs, National Women's Council and Women's Bureau in various civil societies, policy makers and development partners.

Financial and resource provision back-stopping from bi- and multi-lateral donors coupled with the direct support of NGOs to women beneficiaries are a vital partnership safety net for ensuring the attainment of the Objectives of the Gender Empowerment Strategy.

The direct participation of women's organizations and occupational interest groups is fundamental for success and sustainability in decision-making, accessing, utilization and control of the development (*welfare*) resources that the other partners such as, Government, UN Agencies, Donors and NGOs are likely to provide. They therefore need adequate capacitating for assurance of management and operational effectiveness and progress in gender empowerment endeavors'.

The CSO partners and CBOs, policy makers have a gatekeepers role on issues that address the needs of men, women, girls' and boys. They therefore have the capacity to bring about an enabling environment for such a strategy to be implemented at all levels especially among the vulnerable and at risk groups of males and especially females at the grassroots.

Women's organizations must be supported to intensify their commitment to mentorship by creating opportunities for young girls to participate and benefit from training programmes, workshops, and leadership initiatives in order to facilitate continuity in women's representation in decision making;

Civil society should make overtures towards women in government and endeavor to provide technical assistance on issues that affect women in the region. A starting point should be for women in both sectors to work on the common cause of increasing the numerical representation of women at all levels of decision making;

Women's groups in civil society should increase their visibility within the sector and across the region by playing more critical roles in policy formulation processes;

Women's groups should enhance mechanisms for quality collaboration by maximizing efforts and reducing unhealthy competition and rivalry. A database of women's initiatives outlining areas of specialization should be developed to improve cooperation.

6.5 TIME FRAME

A period of ten years, 2010-2020, is planned for the implementation of the activities envisioned in this Gender Strategy. This would allow for a mid-term review by the end of 2015 to evaluate its effectiveness, achievements, constraints and impact, with the possibility of identifying best practices for consolidation, early-warning signals and/or crisis management measures to remedy any problems encountered, which may have been encountered. Funds to cater for these assessment reviews should be ear-marked in readiness.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

ECOWAS' structure, policies, procedures and culture will inevitably govern the kinds of programmes that it is capable of producing under this strategy. It is logically impossible for an organization consistently to produce results that are at variance with its own internal practices and culture. A gender mainstreaming strategy is likely therefore to require considerable internal scrutiny, and strong alliances between those organizational divisions responsible for policy, programme and human resource management. ECOWAS in this sense would have to review its own operational mechanisms for this strategy to become effective.

Among the strategies to be employed by the ECOWAS Parliament is to develop and support opportunities that will provide member countries with training, advisory services, the dissemination of legislation, and the financing of projects that promote women's rights and eliminate sexual violence and gender-based. While there is a growing recognition, however, that gender inequality and the denial of women's rights limits economic growth in member countries and that women's rights are indeed human rights, approaches to poverty reduction rarely address the root causes or structures of the patriarchal systems which allow men to continue to infringe on the human rights of women and girls on a daily basis.

ECOWAS Parliament has an obligation therefore to ensure that this strategic document is followed to ensure the promotion of gender equality in member countries. ECOWAS indeed need to take up the challenges associated with gender in developing our countries. They must create frameworks of exchanges and sharing of policies and diffuse conventions and protocols which are useful instruments for the argument.

Translating the political will into actions which promote women by making them responsible will also call for intense advocacy by ECOWAS parliament to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in all the political processes. This is also important as regards the prevention of conflicts and the search for peace in our war thorn countries, it is important to develop a synergy in the policies and organize to stop the war, associate the people with sensitization for peace.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation

ECOWAS STRATEGIC GENDER OBJECTIVES	INPUT INDICATOR	OUTPUT INDICATORS	OUTCOME INDICATORS
1. An accountable system set to facilitate member countries achieve gender equality targets of the sub-region through the promotion of international, regional and national gender equality and women's rights Legislative instruments and protocols	Gender equality targets outlined, debated and agreed by member countries	# of meetings held by ECOWAS parliament to lobby on legislative instruments on gender and women's equality	Increased knowledge and commitment towards gender and women's equality legislative instruments and protocols
	All gender equality legislative instruments passed and domesticated	# of meetings held by ECOWAS parliament gender committee on accountability systems	
2. Established standards in the promotion of gender equality in the sub-region (freedom of choice)	Standard protocols developed	Standard of protocols developed and shared among member countries	Harmonized, standardized and adopted regional approach to the promotion of gender equality in the
3. Strengthen capacities of member states to facilitate operationalization of gender policies and international legal instruments (human, institutional, technical and financial)	Training Manuals on gender policies and legal instruments developed for member states	Manuals developed and distributed among member countries	Demonstrated capacity of member countries to deliver commitments towards gender equality
	Trainings organized on the policies and legal instruments	Manuals are bilingual offering relevant information for Anglophone and francophone member countries No. of persons who participate in workshops on gender policies and	
4. Ensure effective gender equality mainstreaming and the integration of gender concerns in sector programming	Sector specific gender policies, strategies and actions are developed by member countries including that of the security forces	# of sector ministries including security agencies who have developed gender policies and strategies	Gender sensitive approach to sector programming and planning in the ECOWAS region. Agencies of sector ministries prioritize gender mainstreaming, analysis and budgeting in their programming and planning
	ECOWAS sector ministries dialogue and engage on gender equality and mainstreaming in sector programming	# of meetings of sector ministers on gender # of trainings on gender mainstreaming and programming	

5. Involve national machineries in member countries and sector agencies including the security forces states in dissemination and information sharing on gender equality promotion	Ministers of national machinery report to ECOWAS on status of gender equality and gaps in member countries	# of meetings with National Gender, Women, Family and children's ministries on status of national gender equality # and regularity of reports on gender equality achievements and gaps in member countries	Up to date information dissemination on status of gender inequality in member countries Coordinated and enhanced approach to gender equality promotion in member countries
6. Adapt international, regional and national legislation to treaties and legislations	International and regional legislations and instruments requiring adoption and adaptation	# of countries signatory to international and national legislations # Reports on the domestication of international and region conventions	Increased adoption and adaptation of international and regional gender equality among member countries
7. National gender equality frameworks harmonized with that of other member states	Member countries agree on critical gender equality frameworks for member countries	# of gender equality harmonization meetings organized by ECOWAS	Strengthened opportunities to discuss and harmonize gender equality frameworks
8. Harmonized sector gender policies and strategies	Standardized gender policies and strategy documents on gender for member countries	List of member countries with national and sector gender policies and strategies	Streamlined gender policies and strategies in member countries
9. Gender budgeting strategies adopted as a financial planning framework for the ECOWAS	ECOWAS adopts gender budgeting as a financial budgeting framework for countries Budgeting Frameworks reviewed by member countries	# Gender Budgeting manuals and tools adopted and adapted for the ECOWAS # of Gender Budgeting trainings held for ECOWAS parliamentarians and ministers of member states	Equitable distribution of financial resources for men, women and children in member countries Member countries committed to addressing gaps in allocation of funds to address gender inequality
10. Monitoring and evaluation systems set in place in monitoring inequalities	ECOWAS member countries adopt the inclusion of gender sensitive national M&E frameworks	# M&E systems in member countries reviewed forty gender sensitivity # Member countries who integrate gender into National M&E systems # Sector ministries who incorporate gender indicators in M&E frameworks	Improved M&E systems sensitive to measuring gender equality targets Increased expertise in gender M&E in the ECOWAS member states

ANNEX 2: GENDER DEFINITIONS

Gender refers to the difference between women and men. It is essential to start from the distinction between sex and gender in order to understand what we mean with gender. Gender is not biological, nor physical. Girls and boys are not born knowing how they should look, dress, speak, behave, think or react. Their “gendered” masculine and feminine identities are learnt and constructed through the processes of socialisation within family, school, among peers, at work. These processes define and reaffirm the gender roles they are expected to play in society.⁵

Sex is the *physical, biological* difference between men and women. Men produce sperm and impregnate, while women conceive, give birth, and breastfeed. On this biological difference we construct a structure of social attitudes, behaviours, expectations and assumptions: these are our gender identities and roles.

Gender Discrimination: Prejudice treatment of an individual based on a gender stereotype (may also be referred to as sexism or sexual discrimination).

Gender Division of Labour: The work roles, responsibilities, and activities assigned to women and men based on gender.

Gender Equality: The same status, rights and responsibilities for women and men or development in which there are equal opportunities for women and men to participate and benefit.

Gender Equity: The quality of being fair and right. A stage in the process of achieving gender equality ultimately determined.

Gender Sensitive: Being aware of the difference between women’s and men’s needs, roles, responsibilities, and constraints.

Gender Aware: Recognition that gender is an essential determinant of the life choices available to people in society, but not or fragmented translation into practice.

Gender Responsive: Recognition that gender is an essential determinant of the life choices available to people in society, with interventions

intended to transform existing differentials to create a more balanced relationship between men and women.

Discrimination: The process of making distinction for men against women in job preference, power, authority and control. The gender discrimination provides structure (society) support for male preference.

Sexism: The economic exploitation and social domination of members of one sex by the other, specifically of women by men.

Power: Having the ability to influence or control others. The gender preference in cultures often gives power to men over women. Gender power in culture often gives men authority and control over women in work, family and social events. Gender power often gives the decision making control to men over women.

Subordinate: Inferior to, placed below another in power, authority and importance or to be under the power or authority of another. For gender understanding, this refers to the status of women in cultures around the world.

Gender Analysis: This refers to a systematic ways of looking at the different impacts of development on men and women. As development programme have actively sought to reach women, we have learned that gender has a lot to do with what work we do, how much time we have to do it, and how much money we have to do with it. Gender analysis requires separating data by sex, and understanding how much labour must be done at all stages of the development process; one must always ask how a particular activity, decision or plan will affect men differently than women.

Gender Efficiency: Development objectives both for women and for men that are achieved without wasting time and resources

Gender Sustainable: Development that support the security and regeneration of economic, natural, human and social resources

Gender Development: Positive social and or economic change that is sustainable, equal and efficient

Gender Mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all

⁵ Partly adapted from Oxfam (1994).

levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

(E.1997.L.O. Para.4. Adopted by UN Economic and Social Commission 17/197)

ANNEX 3: ECOWAS PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANS

